

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SB 5748

As Reported by House Committee On: Government Operations & Elections

Title: An act relating to extending contribution limits to candidates for public hospital district boards of commissioners.

Brief Description: Extending contribution limits to candidates for public hospital district boards of commissioners.

Sponsors: Senator Roach.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Government Operations & Elections: 3/20/13, 4/3/13 [DPA].

Brief Summary of Bill (As Amended by Committee)

- Establishes contribution limits for candidates for public hospital district commissioners.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & ELECTIONS

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Hunt, Chair; Bergquist, Vice Chair; Buys, Ranking Minority Member; Taylor, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Alexander, Carlyle, Fitzgibbon, Manweller, Orwall and Van De Wege.

Staff: Marsha Reilly (786-7135).

Background:

State law imposes limits on campaign contributions to candidates for certain public offices. The Public Disclosure Commission (PDC) may adjust these contribution limits based on an inflationary index. Currently, individuals, unions, businesses, and political action committees are limited to contributing an aggregate of:

- \$900 per election to a candidate for the Legislature, county office, city council office, mayoral office, or school board office; and

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- \$1,800 per election to a candidate for statewide elective office, judicial office, and port district offices in districts with more than 200,000 registered voters, currently the Port of Seattle and the Port of Tacoma.

Campaign contribution limits also apply to political parties, including the following:

- state party organizations and legislative caucus political committees are limited to contributing, during an election cycle, an aggregate of 90 cents per registered voter in the jurisdiction from which the candidate is elected; and
- county central committees and legislative district committees are limited to contributing, during an election cycle, an aggregate of 45 cents per registered voter in the jurisdiction from which the candidate is elected.

Public hospital districts are local government entities that may be created to provide health care facilities and services. Since 1945 when they were authorized in state law, more than 50 public hospital districts have been created. Public hospital districts are governed by three, five, or seven-member boards of commissioners. Commissioners are elected to six-year terms.

Summary of Amended Bill:

Public hospital district boards of commissioners in those districts with a population of over 150,000 are added to the list of public offices subject to campaign contribution limits. Accordingly, individuals, unions, businesses, and political action committees are limited to contributing an aggregate of \$900 per election to a candidate. State party organizations and caucus political committees are limited to contributing, during an election cycle, an aggregate of 90 cents per registered voter in the public hospital district. County central committees and legislative district committees are limited to contributing, during an election cycle, an aggregate of 45 cents per registered voter in the public hospital district.

Amended Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The amended bill applies contribution limits to candidates for public hospital district commissioner in districts with a population over 150,000.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date of Amended Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This bill brings hospital districts into the fold with other public offices that are subject to contribution limits. Typically the races are low profile and not a lot of money is spent. Limits on campaign contributions bring a sense of fairness to these races. There have been a few instances in the recent past where large donations have been made. This bill represents a logical good government reform. This bill will end the "contribution buffet" for hospital district commissioners.

(Opposed) The concerns are limited in that it is aimed at one hospital district and the new law would affect all hospital districts. It singles out all public hospital districts.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Senator Roach, prime sponsor; and Anthony Hemstad and Martin Durkan, King County Public Hospital District #1.

(Opposed) Jeff Mero, Association of Washington Public Hospital Districts; and Jim Sullivan.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.